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Israel Reported to Agree U.S. Can Interview Key Aide

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JERUSALEM, Dec. 2 — Israel will permit American law enforcement officials to interview the senior Israeli counterterrorism official said to have been responsible for operating an espionage operation in Washington, Government sources said today.

The arrangement was part of a wider understanding worked out in a telephone call placed early Sunday morning by Secretary of State George P. Shultz to Prime Minister Shimon Peres in an effort to resolve the spy affair before it caused any further damage to American-Israeli relations.

The sources said the other elements of the understanding were the apology Mr. Peres issued Sunday for any Israeli espionage that may have been carried out in the United States, an affirmation of the official Israeli policy against such practices and possible disciplinary measures against any Israeli officials found to have been involved in the affair.

F.B.I. Interviews

In addition, Israel will allow the F.B.I. to send representatives to Israel to interview two Israeli diplomats who were withdrawn from the United States because of their purported connections with Jonathan Jay Pollard, a United States Navy intelligence analyst accused of spying for Israel.

It was not immediately clear what Israel will do with the hundreds of secret documents Mr. Pollard is accused of passing on to his Israeli contacts. At least some of the documents are expected to be returned, according to Israeli officials.

In Washington, a State Department official said Israel had agreed to return documents reportedly given to Israeli agents by Mr. Pollard.

'Exchange of Views'

Israeli officials said the details of where, when and how the F.B.I. would interview the two diplomats and the Israeli counterterror official, who the Israeli press has identified as Rafael Eitan, still have not been worked out. Mr. Eitan is widely known by his nickname Rafi.

"The man who ran the operation will be made available for discussions with the Americans," a senior Israeli official said. "The atmosphere will be one of an exchange of views — not an interrogation under a bright light. The same goes for the two diplomats."

Mr. Eitan, a former chief of operations for the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, served as the adviser on terrorism to Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir between 1978 and September 1984.

While he was the adviser on terrorism, and even after he left that post when Shimon Peres became Prime Minister in September 1984, Mr. Eitan also oversaw the Defense Ministry's Liaison Bureau for Scientific Affairs, which is known in Hebrew by its acronym, Lekem.

Lekem was responsible for collecting sensitive scientific data through Israeli embassies abroad. The two Israeli dip-

lomats withdrawn from the United States, Ilan Ravid and Yosef Yagor, were Lekem employees and Mr. Pollard's main Israeli contacts, the Government sources said. Mr. Ravid was deputy science attaché in Washington and Mr. Yagor was science attaché in the Israeli Consulate in New York.

Lekem is believed to be the "unit" that Prime Minister Peres vowed on Sunday to dismantle if the Israeli inquiry finds it is linked with the Pollard affair.

Portrayal of Inquiry

Although Mr. Peres declared on Sunday that the internal Israeli investigation was proceeding vigorously, the Government sources said it had been virtually over since Wednesday.

The Government sources said Israel wanted to leave the impression of a continuing investigation for two reasons:

First, it does not want to say anything that will damage Mr. Pollard's case in court. Whatever anyone in Israel might think of the Pollard affair, Mr. Pollard himself is viewed in the security establishment as a loyal agent who went out on a limb for Israel.

The second reason, the sources said, is that the longer the investigation continues, the more the Israeli public will forget about the affair and the easier it will be for the Israeli Government to resolve it quietly.

Lingering Questions

It appeared from conversations with top Israeli Government officials that many lingering questions about the affair — particularly the issues of just who was involved and to what extent the political leadership in Israel might have been aware — will be dealt with

privately between the United States and Israel.

"Shultz understood that if he pushed us into a corner, he would risk breaking up the whole Israeli Government," a senior Israeli official said. "He understood that this fragile coalition could not survive an open investigation, where everyone would start pointing at the other guy."

Speaking to a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Prime Minister Peres said today that as a result of his "long talk" with Secretary Shultz about the Pollard affair, "we have cleared up many misunderstandings that existed."

Preserving Relations

"It is important to preserve relations with the United States, which recently reached their peak," he said.

American Jewish leaders visiting Israel appeared to rally around the Prime Minister after his address, saying that they considered the apology and the actions taken by the Israeli Government toward the United States sufficient to put the matter to rest.

"It was a very welcome, appropriate and forthcoming comment both by Mr. Peres and the Secretary of State," said Kenneth J. Bialkin, chairman of the Conference of Presidents. "A mistake happened, an error occurred, it was not authorized and steps should be taken that it doesn't occur again. Hopefully, that should put an end to it at that level."

The Jewish leaders dismissed questions of whether American Jews will be negatively affected by the fact that Israel purportedly used an American Jew, Mr. Pollard, to engage in espionage.

"There are thousands of American Jews working in sensitive areas of the U.S. Government," said Mr. Bialkin. "They are every bit as loyal as any other person and suggestions to the contrary are just mischievous."

Reported Accord on Papers

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 2 — A State Department official said today that Israel had agreed to return documents purportedly given to Israeli agents by Mr. Pollard.

The official said this was part of the agreement worked out by Mr. Shultz and Prime Minister Peres in their telephone conversation, which was the culmination of discussions held earlier by American Embassy and Israeli officials.

During the conversation, the two men in effect negotiated both the Israeli statement that was issued a few hours later and the enthusiastic response by Mr. Shultz.